

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

A. General

In response to the Examiner's Final Office Action mailed April 23 and 28, 2009, reconsideration is respectfully requested for the reasons set forth below. Accompanying this request is a Request for Continued Examination.

B. Summary of Rejection and Reply

The invention relates to a system for online invoice presentment and processing. The system allows a user to view electronically an invoice and process the invoice. The processing allows performing at least two different functions on the invoice. The first function is approval of the invoice. The second function is authorization of the invoice. The system also provides a dynamically adaptable user interface which has at least two selectively deactivatable input options. One of these two input options allows a user to approve an invoice. The other input option allows a user to authorize the invoice.

Since invoice authorization and approval are usually made by different individuals, in other words one person has invoice approval privileges (but not invoice authorization privileges) and another person has invoice authorization privileges (but not invoice approval privileges), the input options of the user interface can be selectively deactivated on the basis of user credentials such as to allow operations that are consistent with the privileges of a particular individual using the system. For example, in the case of a person viewing an invoice, that only has invoice approval privileges, the input option allowing invoice authorization privileges will be deactivated. This prevents that person from accidentally (or intentionally) authorizing the invoice, when he/she has no such privileges.

The user interface also de-activates the invoice authorization control when the invoice being viewed has not yet been approved. This prevents the invoice from being prematurely authorized.

For a better understanding of the user interface the Examiner is invited to refer to the response filed by the applicants on December 31, 2008, pp. 6-7, for additional details and context as to its operation.

Claims 117 – 127 are rejected on the grounds of obviousness over deGroeve 7,206,768 in light of Barker 6,363,421.

Claim 117 requires:

“....

selectively deactivating:

the first input option on the basis of the user credentials data when the user credentials data indicates that the user does not possess invoice approval privileges;

the second input option on the basis of the user credentials data when the user credentials data indicates that the user does not possess payment authorization privileges;

the second input option on the basis of information in the invoice approval status data element, wherein the information in the invoice approval status data element indicates that the invoice has not been approved...”

Claim 124 requires:

“...

the program code implementing:

an Internet browser element allowing a user at the computing apparatus to access a web site which renders on the display an image of the invoice to provide the user with a visual representation of the invoice;

a dynamically adaptable user interface, the user interface having at least two selectively deactivatable input options, wherein:

a selection of the first input option indicating that the user at the computing apparatus has approved the invoice;

a selection of the second input option at the computing apparatus indicating that the user has authorized payment of the invoice;

*the dynamically adaptable user interface selectively deactivating:
the first input option on the basis of user credentials data entered by the user at
the computing apparatus, when the user credentials data indicates that the user
does not possess invoice approval privileges;
the second input option on the basis of the user credentials data when the user
credentials data indicates that the user does not possess payment authorization
privileges;
the second input option on the basis of data received via the I/O from a remote
database indicating that the invoice has not been approved.”*

The Examiner acknowledges that deGroeve does not disclose the user interface having at least two selectively deactivatable input options. However, the Examiner is of the view that this feature is shown by Barker. Specifically the Examiner states “...Barker discloses selectively deactivating options on the basis of user credentials data.” (Column 30, lines 45-55).

Barker relates to “a telecommunication network and more particularly to managing network elements of the telecommunications network.” (Column 1, lines 7-9). In the Summary of the Invention section, Barker describes the invention as “a method . . . for remotely managing a network element of a telecommunications network through a special communication link including a computer internet.” (Column 1, lines 25+). Barker does not relate in the slightest to a computerized process for on-line invoice presentment and processing.

The specific section of Barker relied upon by the Examiner is under the subheading “Security” and reads as follows:

This functionality provides a method of client based access control of network elements, maintenance units and operations on network elements/maintenance units. Upon startup, a client application must register with the server by providing identification of the client host, port, client, and a password. The server retrieves the client record from local data services and returns a session object to the client noting the client's access permissions. This information may be used to provide some level of access control in the client application (e.g. deactivating menu element management system for maintenance operations that are not allowed).

The Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the system of deGroeve “to adapt the selected deactivation of inputs on the basis of user credential data as disclosed by Barker.” Applicants respectfully disagree. As noted by the Examiner on page 5 of the Office Action, deGroeve provides that “certain invoices may be viewable only if certain processing steps had been performed on the invoice.” Thus, there would be no need to modify deGroeve by deactivation of an input option on the basis that the invoice had not previously been approved. Such invoice would simply not be viewable in deGroeve’s system. Applicants respectfully submit that the proposed modification of deGroeve by a feature from a reference which is so totally unrelated to the subject matter of Applicants’ claims and the subject matter of deGroeve is not supportable.

Moreover, Barker’s disclosure of “a method of . . . access control of network elements, maintenance units and operations on network elements/maintenance units” by “deactivating menu element management system for maintenance operations that are not allowed” is quite broad. In contrast, the subject claims are very specific as to the particular input options that are selectively deactivated, and the specific condition or conditions which result in such deactivation. Even if one of ordinary skill in the art familiar with the deGroeve system opted to use the broad concept of deactivating “menu elements” of deGroeve, deGroeve does not contain the specific input options set forth in Applicants’ claim, and deactivated under the specific conditions set forth in the claim. Specifically, modification of deGroeve by the broad concept disclosed in the (unrelated) Barker patent would not result in, with reference to Claim 117, deactivation of a first input option on the basis of user credentials when the user credentials indicate that the user does not possess invoice approval privileges, and deactivation of the second input option on the basis of user credentials when the user indicate that the user does not possess payment authorization privileges, and deactivation of the second input option on the basis of the invoice approval status, wherein the information in the invoice approval status indicates that the invoice has not been approved.

With specific reference to independent claim 124, the proposed combination of deGroeve and Barker would not disclose a deactivatable first input option on the basis of the user credentials when the user credentials indicate that the user does not possess invoice approval privileges, and a deactivatable second input option on the basis of the user credentials when the user credentials indicate that the user does not possess payment authorization privileges, and a deactivatable second input option on the basis of the invoice approval status, wherein the information in the invoice approval status indicates that the invoice has not been approved.

Barker, which discloses the bare concept of deactivating menu options, in a context relating to the management of network elements, which is entirely different from invoice payment processes, simply does not provide the necessary guidance and specificity to a person skilled in the art to modify deGroeve such as to provide deGroeve with input options that de-activate in very specific circumstances. In particular, Barker is silent as to deactivation of a menu option based on status of an invoice. There is nothing in Barker nor in deGroeve to this effect.

In conclusion, the prior art does not show deactivatable input options to prevent specific operations in connection with invoice payment processes. Accordingly, the claims of the application cannot possibly be rejected on the grounds of obviousness when the cited art on which the rejection is made fails to show all the claim limitations.

CONCLUSION

A sincere and earnest effort to respond to the Examiner's Office Action and to place this application into condition for allowance has been made by Applicants and the undersigned. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of the subject claims are respectfully requested.

In view of the above, it is submitted that claims 117-127 are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections is requested. Allowance of claims 117-127 at an early date is solicited.

If, upon consideration of the above, the Examiner should feel that there remain outstanding issues in the present application that could be resolved, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number given below to discuss such issues.

A petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 is being made concurrently with the electronic filing of this response. To the extent additional time or fees are required in connection with this response, please consider this response as a request for same and charge any fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 02-1010 (32423/82536) and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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